



Guelph Youth Singers

Building Choral Excellence in Our Community

34th Season

**Handbook of General Information
(2024-2025)**

**75 Cardigan Street
Room 103
Guelph, ON N1H 3Z7**

(519) 821-8574

**admin@guelphyouthsingers.com
www.guelphyouthsingers.com**

***Please put this handbook in a place where you
will find it for future reference.***

Our Mission: *To create an inclusive and supportive musical environment where youth in our community can learn, build confidence, and share in something bigger than themselves*

Our Vision: *We support the well-being of youth through inclusive, fun, and high-quality musical training and performance experience*

Land Acknowledgement: *The Guelph Youth Singers acknowledge that the land on which we live, learn, and sing is the ancestral land of the Attawandaron people, and the treaty land and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. We recognize the significance of the Dish with One Spoon Covenant to this land as well as our responsibility to the land and future generations. We are committed to reconciliation and to building and strengthening our relationships with our First Nations, Inuit and Métis neighbours.*

Contact Information

Artistic Director
Choir I & II Conductor
Performance Troupe Coach

Marion Samuel-Stevens artisticdirector@guelphyouthsingers.com

Chamber Choir Conductor
Emily Petrenko emily@guelphyouthsingers.com

Choir Coordinator
Heather Fleming (519) 830-4310 admin@guelphyouthsingers.com

Number to call or text for absence due to illness for rehearsals/events:
(519) 830-4310 (Heather's Cell)

Staff List

Marion Samuel-Stevens: Artistic Director; Conductor for Choir I & Choir II; Senior Artistic Support for Performance Troupe

Derica Scott: Assistant Conductor; Collaborative Pianist for all Choirs; Artistic Support for Performance Troupe

Emily Petrenko: Conductor for Chamber Choir

Emily Steers: Director for Mini Music Makers

Heather Fleming: Choir Coordinator

Cathy Meggison: Bookkeeper

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Guelph Youth Singers is a community choir that provides opportunities for talented children within Guelph and surrounding counties to sing and enhance their skills in musical knowledge and theory, to foster personal friendships, to hone social skills, and to develop performance ability.

The GYS Experience

- *Weekly rehearsals with training in vocal technique, repertoire, theory, and sight-singing*
- *Workshops with professionals*
- *Social and learning weekends with other exceptional choirs*
- *Performance opportunities with professional musicians in some of Ontario's best venues*
- *The opportunity to sing with Guelph's prestigious and national award-winning choir*
- *Qualified families can receive bursaries to assist with program fees*

GYS Structure

GYS is a non-profit corporation and a licensed charitable organization. As such, it is managed by a Board of Directors comprised of parents and community members. The annual budget is approximately \$180,000, of which twenty percent is generated through a variety of fund-raising efforts. The remainder consists of choir fees, grants, and other income generated through performances.

As with most non-profit organizations, GYS relies on the time and talents of many volunteers. Every parent is expected to help, and many tasks can be accomplished right from home. We hope all parents can find something to fit their abilities, interests, and time. Tasks may include helping with:

- Workshops and performances
- Publicity and marketing
- Social media support
- Fundraising initiatives
- Administration

Please see section on volunteering in this document for more information.

Annual Community Information Meeting

Each year begins with a Welcome Meeting that is also our Annual General Meeting. Please join us on Tuesday, September 10 from 7:00 to 8:30 at GYMC. One parent or guardian from each family is required to attend this meeting and choristers are welcome. Items to be discussed at this meeting include, but are not limited to:

- A snapshot of the coming season
- Details on volunteer opportunities
- Nomination and election of new Board Members
- A brief presentation of the unaudited financial statement from the previous year (as is required by our governance structure)
- A chance to meet with one another, ask questions, and share ideas.

We may also, from time to time, hold additional meetings to provide updates, announce special projects, answer questions, or check in with families. These meetings will be announced at least one week in advance.

The Choirs (at a glance)

Mini Music Makers – Introductory, inclusive, educational Choir – Ages 4 to 8
Wednesdays 4:15 to 5:10 –GYMC Room 204 – 3 Terms

Choir I – Beginner Training Choir – Ages 6 to 8 depending on musicality and maturity
Tuesdays 5:00 to 6:15 –GYMC Room 204 – \$900/year (plus Family Fees, minus any Applicable Discounts)

Choir II – Intermediate Training Choir – Ages 9 to 11 depending on musicality and maturity
Tuesdays 6:00 to 8:00 –GYMC Room 204 – \$1,200/year (plus Family Fees, minus any Applicable Discounts)

Chamber Choir – Advanced Mixed Voice Choir – Ages 12 and up depending on musicality and maturity
Tuesdays 6:00 to 8:00 –GYMC Room 108 – \$1,200/year (plus Family Fees, minus any Applicable Discounts)

Performance Troupe – Add-on to Chamber Choir (by invitation or audition only)
Rehearsals are scheduled as needed - \$200/year

Choir I and II

Led by Marion Samuel-Stevens and supported by a team of *in-rehearsal music educators*

- healthy vocal production, sight-singing, ear training and theory through singing, movement, improvisation and listening
- introducing younger singers to the foundations of choral singing using musical games, folk songs and two- or three-part harmony
- fostering independence and confidence
- opportunities to perform in concerts, community outreach and in special workshops
- musical and artistic expression and the cohesive growth of the whole child
- developing an understanding of singers' individual musical and vocal abilities and how to use them in a choral context
- artistically building the presence of the choir on social media
- joy, community, and connection through music making

Chamber Choir

Led by Emily Petrenko

- for youth with intermediate and advanced musical knowledge
- developing skills needed to progress through the choir
- vocal technique, ear-training, sight-singing
- rigorous and thrilling rehearsals
- fast-moving professional musical experiences
- singers learning and presenting sophisticated repertoire
- exploring advanced performance techniques
- exciting performance schedule
- concerts and workshops, guest artists, bonus rehearsals
- taking part in select run-out appearances and outreach events
- opportunities for various leadership roles including mentoring and as Chorister Liaison to the Board of Directors (*student volunteer hours*)!
- select movement and choreography
- professional collaborations including Guelph Chamber Choir and Guelph Symphony Orchestra
- artistically building the presence of the choir on social media
- when safe, tours and festivals
- life-changing experiences

General Information

Vocal Assessments & Re-Auditions

Membership in GYS is decided by audition, which is used to determine each singer's readiness and appropriate choir placement. In order to assess strengths and weaknesses, the Conductors may re-audition choristers who wish to advance to another GYS choir.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals for the entire season are scheduled as far in advance as possible, though changes are sometimes necessary. Attendance at all rehearsals and events, including workshops, festivals, and dress rehearsals, is required. Please review the section on commitment for full details about expectations. We ask that parents ensure their chorister arrives **at least 10 minutes prior** to the beginning of all rehearsals. This provides time for choristers to greet their friends and get ready to start singing.

Absences

Choristers should only miss rehearsals due to illness. **Please email admin@guelphyouthsingers.com or call Heather's cell to report absences at (519) 830-4310.** If a chorister is absent and no email or phone call has been received, the chorister's home may be contacted. *If a chorister misses two rehearsals or more in any term for reasons other than sickness, the Conductor will reach out to the family.*

Unavoidable schedule conflicts aside from illness do sometimes arise (such as Royal Conservatory Examinations) and in that case, the Conductor should be notified in advance, in writing (email is great!), and given the reason for the projected absence. Please include the Choir Coordinator (admin@guelphyouthsingers.com) in your email.

Communication: Weekly Memos

A weekly memo is shared by email each Thursday while choirs are in session. Memos contain essential, choir-specific information, including notes and tasks from the conductor as well as time-sensitive information about events and fundraising. Weekly memos are our communication lifeline. **Please read these memos immediately** and let the Choir Coordinator know if you have not received one (it may have landed in your spam folder). Older choristers will also be on email distribution lists and there is an expectation that they will read and respond to memo items. Memos will also be uploaded to the GYS members portal.

Online Members Portal - New this Year

Visit guelphyouthsingers.com/existing-members/

Here you will find links to weekly memos, practice tracks, schedule updates, a link to this handbook, and any other pertinent information.

Theory & Sight-Singing

Theory and sight-singing will be offered for all choristers as part of their registration fees. As part of the GYS education, musicianship and sight-singing will be an ongoing program through all choirs. Choristers will be evaluated (casually) and training will cover old materials as well as introduce new musical concepts.

Homework and Practice Tracks

Practicing at home reinforces lessons from rehearsals and accelerates learning of both notes and words. It also helps the ear to develop much more quickly than can be achieved in just one rehearsal per week. Recordings of repertoire may be sent out as links to online sources or accessed on the members portal and in weekly memos. These aids should be used for practice to improve music reading and accuracy. All Choir I & II and most Choir III music is memorized for performances and should be memorized as early as possible.

Chorister's Commitment

GYS members are always representing themselves, their families, and the Choir. GYS strives for a high standard of behaviour, in addition to a high standard of performance. A Code of Conduct is provided below, and choristers are asked to read it and accept it as part of their commitment to GYS at the time of registration.

A check box on the registration form indicates a chorister's agreement to abide by the following Commitment:

- ***To attend every rehearsal and event, on time, with all music ready, and prepared to sing***
- ***To read and/or have parents read all memos immediately***
- ***To participate openly in all rehearsals, events, and fundraising activities***
- ***To acknowledge that they are members of Guelph Youth Singers and must act professionally at all times***

Chorister's Code of Conduct

A check box on the registration form indicates a chorister's agreement to abide by the following Code of Conduct:

Be aware, at all times, of the professional image of the Choir and behave in a dignified and respectful manner. Each chorister represents Guelph Youth Singers.

Be courteous to chaperones, staff, volunteers, and other choristers.

Rules to be followed at any GYS event:

- Choristers must always be in the care of a chaperone. Any leeway for high school aged choristers is allowed only at the discretion of the head chaperone and the conductor. Choristers must not wander away from the group at any time.
- Gum is not permitted at any choir event, including rehearsals.
- Gaming electronic devices are not permitted at any choir event, including rehearsals.
- No non-choir related cell phone calls are allowed unless there has been prior communication between the parents and conductors about their usage.
- Uniforms must be worn respectfully: intact and not in combination with other clothes.
- Any jewelry, make-up, or ornamentation worn onstage or during online video recordings must be discreet.

Discipline

Any chorister whose behaviour is deemed to be out of line with this code may be prevented from participating and may be asked to leave the choir.

At all times choristers must be concerned with the safety, well-being, image, and professionalism of the entire choir and every individual chorister. If there is a question about the appropriateness of any action, or some other matter that needs to be addressed, choristers should speak to the conductor, the head chaperone, or the choir coordinator.

Parent's Commitment

A checkbox on the registration form indicates each parent's agreement to the following:

I have read the enclosed registration documents and other information provided and have indicated on the registration form that I agree to participate as stated below:

- to support my child(ren) by making it possible for them to be in attendance and on time for all choir events
- to keep track of all information received through memos, emails, or phone calls
- to help with, or participate in, fundraising as I am able
- to be an active volunteer for the organization

I understand that from time to time, GYS choristers and parents have photos and videos taken for promotional or other purposes and, unless I notify GYS in writing to the contrary, I consent to such photos and videos being taken of me and/or my child. We ask for your help with safeguarding our children and our art by not video recording, photographing, or screenshotting our events or concerts.

I realize that Guelph Youth Singers will act carefully and thoughtfully on my child's behalf at all times. With that understanding, I release Guelph Youth Singers from any liability with regard to accidents that may happen while I am, or my child is, participating in choir activities.

Refunds

GYS has established the following policy regarding refunds:

1. A full refund will be provided if a family/chorister withdraws, in writing, before rehearsals begin.
2. A full refund, minus the non-refundable \$50 membership fee, will be provided if a written request is submitted by the 3rd rehearsal.
3. Refunds may be considered under extenuating circumstances throughout the year.
4. At the discretion of the conductor, an exception can be made for boys who are no longer able to sing in a treble choir.

Safety, Privacy, and Protection

GYS is committed to creating a positive, safe environment for our choristers and staff. The intention of the GYS Safety and Protection Policy is to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to protect the members and supporters of Guelph Youth Singers and to ensure that proper steps are taken in the event of an incident.

When choristers join GYS, we ask for the following information:

- the chorister's name and that of their parent(s) or guardian(s),
- mailing address
- phone number
- email address
- emergency contact and medical information - for use in the absence of the parent(s) or guardian(s).

Privacy Policy

Guelph Youth Singers is committed to protecting the privacy of the personal information of its members, board of directors, employees, web-users and other stakeholders. GYS does not sell, trade, or give out its membership mailing lists. Over the course of operations, GYS frequently gathers and uses personal information. Anyone from whom such information is collected may expect that it will be carefully protected and that any use of, or other dealing with, this information is subject to consent.

Personal Information Defined

Personal information is any information that can be used to distinguish, identify, or contact a specific individual. This information can include an individual's opinions or beliefs, as well as facts about, or related to, the individual. Business contact information and certain publicly available information, such as names, addresses and telephone numbers as published in telephone directories are not considered personal information.

Privacy Practices

Personal information gathered by Guelph Youth Singers is kept in confidence. Only authorized GYS personnel, or those assigned by GYS personnel, have access to this information based only on their need to deal with the information for the reason(s) for which it was obtained. Safeguards are in place to ensure that the information is not disclosed or shared more widely than is necessary to achieve the purpose for which it was gathered. Personal information that is no longer required to fulfill the stated purpose will be destroyed or made anonymous (for example: emergency contact and medical information).

Financial Information

Fee Structure

GYS works hard to keep tuition fees as low as possible. The fees you pay are used to support the following:

- Instruction from accomplished and highly skilled conductors
- Theory and sight-singing programme
- Professional accompaniment
- Rehearsals in an acoustically superior venue
- Rental or purchase of original choral music
- Programme administration
- Professional production of performances and concerts

2024/25 annual tuition per choir is as follows and families have the option of paying in full, or in 2 or 9 installments.

- Choir I: \$900
- Choir II: \$1,200
- Chamber Choir: \$1,200
- Performance Troop: \$200 (Add-on for Chamber Choir by invitation or audition only)
- Family Fees: \$150 (include Annual Membership Fee and a pair of tickets to the spring and winter concerts)

Registration

Registration involves three steps:

1. Visit guelphyouthsingers.com/registration-package/ and complete the online registration form
2. You will receive an emailed invoice confirming your registration fees and outlining payment options:
 - pay the entire amount owed for the upcoming choir year on September 1, 2024
 - pay the total in 2 installments dated September 1, 2024 and January 1, 2025
 - pay the total in 9 installments dated September 1, 2024 to May 1, 2025 inclusive

3. e-Transfers are the preferred method of payment and can be sent to admin@guelphyouthsingers.com.

If paying by cheque, please make them payable to Guelph Youth Singers and mail to:

Guelph Youth Singers, 103-75 Cardigan St., Guelph, ON, N1H 3Z7

There will be a charge of \$37 for all returned cheques; \$30 of which will be directed to the Dominic Gregorio Bursary Fund, and the remaining \$7 will be for bank charges.

Financial Support

Sibling Discount

We want to support families during these difficult times and so are offering a Sibling Discount of \$500 for each additional family member that registers for the full season.

Summer Camp Discount

All choristers who attended GYS Musical Theatre Summer Camp 2024 will receive a \$250 registration discount.

New Chorister Incentive!!!

When a GYS family refers a new family and both register for the full season, each family will receive a 20% program discount for the year! This discount can only be claimed once per family per year and will be deducted after any other discounts have been applied. The referred family must not have been a member of GYS previously.

\$300 Coupon for Annual Tuition Discount

All existing choristers and members of the GYS Kiwanis Choir received a \$300 coupon at the end of last season. These coupons have also been distributed widely at events such as Family Fun Nights, Guelph Multicultural Festival, and Hillside Festival. This coupon will be applied proportionately per term.

Bursaries

GYS accepts applications for bursaries based on financial need and the availability of the Dominic Gregorio Bursary Fund. Choristers and/or parents should submit an application form, available from the Choir Coordinator. All applications are reviewed by the Bursary Committee **in confidence**.

Donations

All donations are gratefully received and contributions exceeding \$10.00 will receive a charitable donation receipt. If a donation is made, the mailing address is required on the tax receipt by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Please consider supporting the Dr. Dominic Gregorio Bursary Fund. Visit the GYS page at CanadaHelps.org (via www.guelphyouthsingers.com/donate).

Volunteering with GYS

Parent power is **essential** to sustaining this high-quality organization. There are countless ways for each person to contribute to the functioning of GYS. We need your talent and a bit of your time.

Below are some opportunities that may arise to support our choirs as they meet and rehearse. If something interests you, please contact the Choir Coordinator as soon as possible.

Board of Directors Member

- Attend a monthly meeting in person or via Zoom and have fun sharing ideas and helping to implement plans to continue improving GYS
- Assist with fundraising initiatives, corporate sponsorship, grant research and writing, greening GYS, improving community outreach, updating policies and procedures, continuing to further our DEIA efforts.

Choir I & Choir II Rehearsal Assistants

- Attend rehearsal and assist the Conductor as needed

Chamber Choir Rehearsal Assistant

- Attend rehearsal and assist the Conductor as needed

Music Librarian

- Assist with collecting, organizing, and distributing music

Volunteer tasks requiring specific expertise

• Media contact and relations	• Graphic artist
• Professional photography	• Grant Writing
• Instrumentalist	• Video Production
• Santa Claus Parade, planning, set up and take down	• Carolling Chaperones

Fundraising

- Preparing and updating sponsorship packages for businesses, employers
- Support event-specific fundraising (e.g. poinsettia sales, online auction, raffles, etc.)

Other skills?

- Many parents have special skills that can help make choir a wonderful experience. Please let the Choir Coordinator know if there is something special you can offer.

Mentoring Opportunities for Senior Choristers

Choristers from Chamber Choir are valued as mentors and assistants to Choir I & Choir II. If you would like to assist with our Junior Choirs, please visit guelphyouthsingers.com/volunteer-opportunities/ and submit the online form. Time spent mentoring with GYS can be counted towards the 40 volunteer hours required to earn your Ontario Secondary School Diploma.